

Transfer of Offenders

incarcerated. There are those who have found that some of those representatives have not met the level of expertise and compassion we have expected. I suggest to the House that under this legislation we are going to have to be particularly diligent in ensuring that Canadian nationals incarcerated in foreign jurisdictions to whom this law may be applicable are told without equivocation what the situation is and that the Bill of Rights may have to be offended. However, we have no choice.

I think it is terribly important that Canadian nationals who are convicted and sentenced elsewhere and who apply for the provisions of this bill to apply to them be assisted so that we do not reap the undeserved benefits of headlines and television spectacles about people who have been subjected to all kinds of things which are completely repugnant to us but which nevertheless under this legislation we must accept.

In fairness to the parliamentary secretary, I think I should say that there may be amendments, most of them of a technical nature, at the committee stage. The Solicitor General (Mr. Blais), his parliamentary secretary and his department would do the committee a great favour—because I think they know of a number of these technical amendments—if they would draft some amendments at the earliest possible date and make them available for study at the very first meeting of the committee considering this legislation. The parliamentary secretary is making a gesture which I think means “I agree” or “Je suis d'accord”.

One point I would like to make on behalf of the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands (Miss MacDonald) is that the worst and most desperate offenders wind up at Millhaven. Those who have nothing more to lose are put into the special handling unit. The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands is naturally concerned because Millhaven is continually in a state of a certain amount of unrest. There are those who may have some reservations about our ability to handle people in this special handling unit. I file this one caveat which the hon. member for Kingston and The Islands has put to me with sincere concern. She wonders how much pressure will be put on that particular institution.

I hope that at the committee stage departmental officials will be able to provide us with some statistical information, not just with respect to United States and Mexican nationals incarcerated here who may choose to avail themselves of the provisions of this legislation, but also Canadians in those two jurisdictions. In addition, I would like to have some information which is as detailed as is reasonably possible on Canadians who have been imprisoned in other jurisdictions. I think immediately of Italy, and I think also of Italian nationals who may be incarcerated here in Canada. I think also of the United Kingdom.

In terms of numbers I am not sure which country has the greatest number of visitors here in Canada who have gone afoul of the law and vice versa, but I hope a certain amount of that kind of information can be made available to the committee so that the committee can urge upon the Solicitor General, if it is deemed wise, that a certain amount of urgency be

[Mr. Jarvis.]

connected with coming to grips with treaties with certain other jurisdictions in addition to Mexico and the United States.

I would have liked to have taken a few more minutes on this legislation, but I am extremely anxious that we conclude it today. I am equally anxious that it gets into the committee, is studied diligently but expeditiously, and gets back into this House for passage. I look forward to hearing the remarks of the spokesman for the New Democratic Party, the hon. member for New Westminster (Mr. Leggatt). I know he wants to address himself to the provisions of this bill before the time runs out.

In conclusion, we in the official opposition support this legislation. We have certain pertinent questions to put, and we will seek information in the committee. However, we urge that the matter be treated as a matter of some urgency by that committee, that the bill come back to the House and become law, so that it will not be lost in the ashes of the next election.

● (1552)

Mr. Stuart Leggatt (New Westminster): Mr. Speaker, I would like to associate myself generally with the remarks of the two previous speakers. It is very unfortunate that when a piece of good legislation—as I think this is—is introduced by the government, the press will likely take no notice of it just because there does not happen to be any great conflict.

I might go further than the hon. member for Perth-Wilmot (Mr. Jarvis) and say that, in order to expedite its passage, we might give consideration to putting the bill through in committee of the whole rather than submitting it to the standing committee. I have examined the bill, as I know the hon. member for Perth-Wilmot has, and I have not come up with any amendments that would assist in effecting what the bill seeks to accomplish.

I am as nervous as the hon. member that we might have an election any day and that this useful piece of legislation might die on the order paper. If that should happen, there are people in prisons all over the world who will be severely affected.

An hon. Member: Pass it now, then.

Mr. Leggatt: The House will have my co-operation if you want to move it into committee of the whole.

I want to deal, Mr. Speaker, with a couple of aspects of the bill. First, there is an assumption inherent in the remarks made today that Canadians abroad are generally mistreated if they violate the laws of the country they are in. I am tired of the tear-jerking stories in my local newspapers about British Columbians who go to Mexico and get into the drug trade and then complain about their mistreatment in Mexican jails.

I think most members will agree that members of parliament have a reasonably good record in protecting the rights of citizens, but when people visit a foreign country, surely they should obey the laws of that country. I am a little disturbed about the Canadian chauvinism that is constantly played up in the newspapers to the effect that a Canadian in a Mexican jail will be abused, but that in a Canadian jail everything is roses.